



## Press release

9.11.2022

### ***The People's Piazza, A History of Covent Garden* presented by StoryTrails Executive Producer David Olusoga to be broadcast on BBC2 on Sunday 13 November**

TV historian, presenter and StoryTrails Executive Producer David Olusoga's companion documentary film to StoryTrails, *The People's Piazza, A History of Covent Garden* will be broadcast on BBC Two on Sunday 13 November at 9pm following the film's premiere at the BFI London Film Festival in October as part of the LFF For Free programme. StoryTrails, the UK's largest immersive storytelling experience has been travelling across the UK this summer, from Omagh to Dundee and Swansea to Slough. Showcasing hundreds of local stories and hidden histories using exciting new interactive technologies, StoryTrails has been commissioned as part of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK.

Telling the story of one of the nation's best-known public spaces, the Covent Garden Piazza, from its early years as a playground for the aristocracy, through decline and dereliction to eventual rebirth, TV historian, presenter and StoryTrails Executive Producer David Olusoga steps back in time to explore the iconic piazza's tumultuous history. Over four centuries the Covent Garden Piazza has been a market, a meeting place, and a site of protest, performance and renewal. In this documentary David Olusoga explores its history, and with the help of a host of experts and eyewitnesses, conjures up the ghosts of the past – market traders, orphans, artists and activists.

Co-produced with StoryFutures Academy the National Centre for Immersive Storytelling, the team behind StoryTrails and the BFI, the innovative film weaves together a wealth of archive film, including Lindsay Anderson's *Every Day Except Christmas* (1957) from the BFI National Archive with virtual production techniques to bring to life the history of this iconic civic space.

Professor James Bennett, Director of StoryTrails said "StoryTrails harnessed the magic of immersive storytelling to bring to life untold stories from the past, using augmented and virtual reality to reanimate public spaces in towns and cities across the UK, transforming town squares, local libraries and streets into virtual portals through which to explore stories of historical change. David's documentary is a companion piece to StoryTrails, focusing on the hidden and untold stories of arguably one of the nation's best known public spaces, the Covent Garden Piazza and uses state of the art virtual production techniques to bring different historical periods to life".

Ben Luxford, Head of UK Audiences at the BFI, said: "Following its successful premiere at last month's BFI London Film Festival, we're excited that audiences everywhere will now be able to enjoy this fascinating documentary on BBC Two and iPlayer. *The People's Piazza* is a love letter to one of the nation's most iconic public spaces, drawing extensively on the rich collections of the BFI National Archive to bring its stories and forgotten histories to life. We're so pleased to have helped audiences across the UK reconnect with their public spaces via the innovative and ground-breaking StoryTrails project, and it's been stimulating and rewarding realising this ambition with David Olusoga and the Uplands team as well as with our partners at StoryFutures and the BBC."

David Olusoga, Presenter and Executive Producer wrote: "The Covent Garden Piazza is a place that has always fascinated me and thanks to the help of our production partners I'm delighted that we're finally able to bring its remarkable story to the screen. I hope the film resonates with viewers and inspires them to see their own public spaces with new eyes."

Audiences can discover for themselves local stories and hidden histories from 15 towns and cities across the UK, including London through augmented reality story trails and experiences via the free Story-Trails app. These digital experiences have been created using film and television archive from the BFI, BBC and national and regional archives to present a unique and magical window into the past.

Phil Batty, Executive Director of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, said: "StoryTrails is a fascinating journey through some of the people and places that make up the UK. Like other UNBOXED projects it's the result of new creative collaborations, here combining developing immersive technologies and the arts to tell stories in thrilling new ways. It's also gone to the heart of communities, through the local knowledge and enthusiasm of the 50 young creatives who have helped develop the project. I hope David's wonderful film will inspire people to explore the many tales that have been uncovered in the other 15 towns and cities and make up a new people's history."

The free Story-Trails app is available to download from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#). The app includes all the augmented reality story trails and experiences from each of the 15 locations the project has visited this summer, bringing to life untold local stories from different communities across the UK. Audiences can do their local trail themselves on the streets of their local town or from the comfort of their home.

In addition, StoryFutures Academy presents, in association with Uplands Television, *The People's Piazza: Behind The Scenes of a Virtual Production*. This four-episode "Behind The Scenes" series explores how virtual production helped bring to life the archival material of the historically renowned Covent Garden Piazza, and is available on [StoryFutures Academy](#) from on 21 November 2022.

StoryTrails is led by StoryFutures Academy, the National Centre for Immersive Storytelling and delivered in partnership with the British Film Institute (BFI), broadcaster and filmmaker, David Olusoga, the BBC, Uplands Television, and leading immersive specialists ISO Design and Nexus Studios. It uses cutting edge technology from Niantic, makers of Pokémon Go, and brought to life in The Reading Agency's national network of libraries and by event-making specialists ProduceUK.

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is funded and supported by the four governments of the UK and is commissioned and delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council, Creative Wales and EventScotland.

[www.bbc.co.uk/coventgarden](http://www.bbc.co.uk/coventgarden)  
[story-trails.com](http://story-trails.com)

Facebook and Instagram @StoryTrailsProject. Twitter @StoryFuturesA

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**StoryTrails media enquiries:**

Truda Spruyt, Managing Director, Four

[storytrails@fourcommunications.com](mailto:storytrails@fourcommunications.com)

07740 725206

Sara Parsons, PR & Media Manager for StoryTrails at Royal Holloway, University of London

[sara.parsons@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:sara.parsons@royalholloway.ac.uk)

07467 858672

**UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK media enquiries:**

Jeanette Ward, Head of Media Relations, UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK

[Jeanette.ward@unboxed2022.uk](mailto:Jeanette.ward@unboxed2022.uk)

07729 930 812

**Notes to Editors**

**About StoryTrails**

StoryTrails is a unique immersive storytelling experience, where untold stories from the past are brought to life through the magic of the 3D internet using augmented and virtual reality to reanimate public spaces in towns and cities across the UK. Audiences will time-travel via the wonder of new technologies to experience untold local histories where they happened. StoryTrails is led by StoryFutures Academy which is run by Royal Holloway, University of London and the National Film and Television School (NFTS).

StoryTrails is one of 10 projects commissioned for [UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK](#), a ground-breaking UK-wide celebration of creativity in 2022 that will bring people together and reach millions through free, large-scale immersive installations and globally accessible digital experiences in the UK's most ambitious showcase of creative collaboration.

StoryTrails will culminate with a specially commissioned film by David Olusoga which will screen in cinemas across the UK and be made available to audiences on BBC iPlayer.

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[story-trails.com](http://story-trails.com)

**About StoryFutures Academy - [storyfutures.com/academy](http://storyfutures.com/academy)**

StoryFutures Academy is the UK's National Centre for Immersive Storytelling, run by Royal Holloway, University of London and the National Film and Television School (NFTS). Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation, the Academy develops cutting-edge creative training and research programmes, to ensure the UK creative workforce is the most skilled in the world in the use of virtual, augmented and real-time production technology for immersive storytelling.

Alumni of StoryFutures Academy labs have so far included Oscar and BAFTA winning Director Asif Kapadia, Oscar winning VFX Supervisor Paul Franklin and Turner Prize winning conceptual artist Gillian Wearing OBE.

With our partners, over £1m has been invested in UK immersive production, across co-productions with BBC3, and Production Booster and Kickstart development funding. The award-winning VR Documentary Common Ground was the first-ever funded co-production, premiering at the Tribeca Film Festival in early 2019. Violence, an artistic collaboration between film director Shola Amoo (The Last Tree) and producer Eleanor Whitley (Marshmallow Laser Feast), had its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival, as part of the Cannes XR Virtual at the Marché du film de Cannes, in June 2020. Laika, commissioned by StoryFutures Academy and directed by BAFTA and Academy Award winning Asif Kapadia, made its world premiere in VR at BFI London Film Festival 2021 as part of their Expanded programme.

**About Royal Holloway, University of London – [royalholloway.ac.uk](http://royalholloway.ac.uk)**

Royal Holloway, University of London, is ranked in the top 25 universities in the UK. Through world class research that expands minds and changes lives, the dedication of our teachers and the feel of the Royal Holloway experience, ours is a community that inspires individuals to succeed academically, socially and personally.

The university was founded by two social reformers who pioneered the ideal of education and knowledge for all who could benefit. Their vision lives on today. As one of the UK's leading research-intensive universities we are home to some of the world's foremost

authorities in the sciences, arts, business, economics and law. We are strengthened by diversity, and welcome students and academics who travel from all over the world to study and work here, ensuring an international and multi-cultural perspective within a close knit and historic campus.

**About UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK - [unboxed2022.uk](http://unboxed2022.uk)**

**UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK** is a celebration of creativity taking place across the UK in 2022. It includes free large-scale events, installations, and globally accessible digital experiences in the UK's most ambitious showcase of creative collaboration. Produced by some of the brightest minds in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths, UNBOXED features ten major multi-site and digital creative projects that share new ideas and possibilities for the future. Events and activities are taking place from 1 March to 20 November 2022 – from the Outer Hebrides to Southampton and from Omagh to Swansea, and across traditional and online media. UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is funded and supported by the four governments of the UK and is commissioned and delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council, Creative Wales, and EventScotland.

**About BFI**

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Tim Richards.

